

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3669
INFO AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TUNIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN PRIORITY
CINCUSNAVEUR PRIORITY
COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY
SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
USDOCOSOUTH PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 16620

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PLOS ENRG TS LY
SUBJ: QUAI COMMENTS ON LIBYAN-TUNISIAN CONTINENTAL
SHELF DISPUTE

1. ACCORDING TO QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR NORTH AFRICA
TRISTAN D'ALBIS, "SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED SINCE
LAST FRIDAY" IN TUNIS AND TRIPOLI WHICH MAKES THE
LIKELIHOOD OF CONFLICT OVER THE CONTINENTAL SHELF
REMOTE. HE SAID THAT ARAB LEAGUE SECRETARY GENERAL
MAHMOUD RIAD WOULD MEET TODAY, JUNE 7, AT TUNIS WITH
THE LIBYAN AND TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTERS AND
SPECULATED THAT THE VERY FACT OF THE MEETING INDICATES
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THAT BOTH COUNTRIES ARE READY TO FIND A COMPROMISE OVER
THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF THE READING AND BATES RIG. IN
ANY CASE, HE THOUGHT TUNISIA NEVER INTENDED TO USE FORCE
DESPITE ITS THREATENING RHETORIC. HE DOUBTED, HOWEVER,
THAT LIBYA WOULD ACCEPT ARBITRATION ON THE BASIC PROBLEM
OF DETERMINING SHELF BOUNDARIES.

2. ALBIS SAID THAT FRENCH IDEAS ABOUT UNDERTAKING A MEDIATION EFFORT ARE AT A STANDSTILL. HE HINTED THAT THE FRENCH HAD HAD IN MIND APPROACHING RIAD THEMSELVES, BUT HAD BACKED OFF BECAUSE THEY FEARED THAT HIS NATIONALITY WOULD MAKE HIM UNACCEPTABLE TO THE LIBYANS AS A GO-BETWEEN.

3. AS FOR ELF DRILLING PLANS, ALBIS SAID THAT THE PROBLEM WAS STILL ACADEMIC SINCE THE FRENCH FIRM DID NOT INTEND TO BEGIN OPERATIONS UNTIL JULY. HE EXPRESSED SURPRISE TO HEAR THAT THE COMPANY HAD INDICATED TO THE EMBASSY THAT IT HAD SUSPENDED ITS DRILLING PLANS PENDING RESOLUTION OF THE READING AND BATES AFFAIR (PARIS 15376), BUT ADDED THAT IT WOULD OF COURSE BE PRUDENT FOR ELF TO DO SO.

4. MEANWHILE, FORMER TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MOHAMED MASMOUDI WAS REPORTED BY AFP ON JUNE 6 AS HAVING SENT A TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA URGING HIM NOT TO RESPOND NEGATIVELY TO COL. QADHAFI'S RECENT PROPOSALS. "PRESIDENT QADHAFI HAS JUST PROPOSED BY-PASSING THE PROBLEM OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AND ORGANIZING TUNISIAN-LIBYAN SOLIDARITY BY JOINING TOGETHER THE RESOURCES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES. THESE PROPOSALS ARE ONCE AGAIN WORTHY OF STUDY. I CALL UPON YOU NOT TO REPLY NEGATIVELY." GAMMON

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